/216 cont./

584 There are cases in which a brother or a friend of the suitor wishes to serve as intermediary and offers to speak to the father-in-law. The gesture is very well received and highly appreciated.

585 583 During the first two or three days the young husband remains in the forest /217/ hunting; the woman hangs her hammock near that of her husband in the house of the family of orientation, [476] that is, where she has always lived. This time having elapsed, the man tries to bring together some twenty friends to help him clear the land for the three conucos requested by his father-in-law. Usually he has no difficulty in finding this help. The father of the boy and his brothers do their best to feed the workers well, and, when the work is done, the young husband offers them as presents arrows, bows, etc. which they refuse to accept. Later, the man begins to clear some conucos for his own family.

584 627 Our informant from the upper Caura insisted that, once consent has been obtained, delivery is definite and the girl cannot then accept any other young man. In order to give us an example, he told us what had happened to a man of his group.

A girl had accepted him as a husband, but, because of unforeseen circumstances, he had not had time to talk to the father-in-law. Then the girl surrendered to another young man and married him. The father-in-law knew nothing about the first offer. One day the people of the pueblo found the young couple in their hammock pierced by two arrows poisoned with curare. The murderer informed the father-in-law and the inhabitants of the rancheria of the motive which had caused him to perpetrate the crime. Neither the father-in-law nor the people intervened in the matter, for, according to them, the young lover was right in punishing the two who had deceived him in this way.

584 595 881 Sometimes parents marry off their children before they reach maturity. Some men also take a second wife when she is still underage, but they respect them and have no sexual contact with them until after the first menstrual periods have passed.

Today, however, steel tools are quite common, being provided by the several missionaries who have recently located posts at a number of locations in Yąnomamö territory. The tools that they give to their local people are eventually traded inland to more remote villages so that all the Yąnomamö, even those who have not yet had any direct contact with outsiders, now have steel tools.[7] Before the missionaries arrived, the Yąnomamö occasionally obtained steel tools from the Carib-speaking Makiritare Indians, who have long been in contact with civilization. Some of the Makiritare made periodic canoe trips in the last century as far east as Georgetown in order to obtain these tools. Kąobawä told me that when he was a young man, his village had a single piece of steel, a portion of a broken machete that came ultimately from the Makiritare Indians by way of several intermediate Yąnomamö villages. Everybody in the village used this tool when they made their gardens. It was hafted on a split stick and used as an axe. I have seen broken machetes used in this fashion in the more remote, steel-poor villages.

The Yąnomamö usually fell the big trees toward the end of the wet season, although I have seen them do it at all times of the year. In general, the clearing of the land tends to be an activity of the wet season while the burning is done during the dry season, but this schedule is by no means rigorous. An adequate burning can be achieved at the peak of the rainy season, provided that there are two days of sunshine in succession. The dead brush and the leaves of the large trees dry out rather quickly in the sun, provided that they have been lying on the ground for a sufficiently long period of time. The trunks of the large trees are never burned, so that a newly cleared garden is strewn with logs lying helter-skelter all over the cleared patch. These serve as boundaries between individual gardens, as the crops belong to the person who plants them.

Each man clears his own land. Brothers will usually clear adjacent portions of land and, if their father is still living, his garden will be among theirs. The headman of the village generally has the largest garden, as he must produce larger quantities of food; he is obliged to give food away at feasts. He can frequently enlist the aid of other men to help him make a large garden. Kąobawä, for example, is helped by a younger brother, a brother-in-law, and the latter's son. Once in a while one of his sisters who lives in a different village visits for a long stretch of time, and her son-in-law also helps Kąobawä work in the garden during these visits.

After the brush has dried out and the larger trees felled, the portable timber and brush is gathered up into piles and burned, each man having several fires going in his own patch, to which he hauls the brush as he gathers it up. Usually, the fires are built under or next to one of the larger logs. In this way the logs dry out even more completely and can be easily chopped up by the women for firewood. The ashes are not scattered to improve soil fertility.

If the new site is a great distance from the previous garden, the men will have to make numerous trips between the two sites in order to transport the plantain cuttings. If an ally's village is closer to the new garden site, some cuttings can be borrowed from his gardens, thereby reducing the transportation labor. Each mature plantain or banana plant sends out suckers which sprout a few feet away from the adult stalk. When the Yąnomamö cut the bunch of plantains or bananas from the producing plant, they also cut the entire plant down to permit the younger suckers to receive the sunlight. The larger

[7] One missionary told me that he has given the residents of his village approximately 3000 machetes over the past eight years! These are traded inland to more remote Yąnomamö.